

**Title:** Outer Space Creature

**Grade Ranges:**

K-4

5-8

9-12

**Subject Tag:**

Creative Writing: Poetry

Creative Writing: General

Science: Stars and Planets

**Synopsis:**

As an individual lesson or part of a science unit, students will read Shel Silverstein's poem "Planet of Mars." In a follow-up discussion, students will compare Silverstein's imaginative description of a Martian to scientific evidence that has been gained through space explorations. After the class brainstorms ideas about what a creature from outer space might be like, students will write their own description and draw a picture.

**Keywords:**

Shel Silverstein, poetry, "Planet of Mars," outer space, Martian, descriptive writing

**Body:**

1. Read the Shel Silverstein poem "Planet of Mars" to the class. Discuss the vocabulary, making sure the students understand the meaning of *charms* and *graces*. Discuss the illustration as it relates to the theme of the poem.
2. Discuss the fact that Silverstein's book was published in 1974. Give the class a brief overview of the scientific knowledge about Mars on or before that year. (See related links for details.) For older students, use a timeline to bring them up to date with recent space probes to Mars and the other planets.
3. Have the class brainstorm ideas of what a creature from outer space might look like. Use a graphic organizer to display their ideas, encouraging the use of sensory details.
4. Review the qualities of good descriptive writing and the writing process. Instruct the class to write their own description of a creature from outer space. For younger students, model the descriptive mode by composing a class description first. When students are ready to write individually, give them specific focus points such as how the creature moves around and how it communicates.
5. Instruct the class to illustrate their creature on a separate piece of paper.

**Related Links:**

Shel Silverstein Teacher Resource File

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/silverstein.htm>

This page contains a biography, bibliography, and lesson plans all related to Shel Silverstein and his work. From James Madison University's Internet School Library Media Center.

Shel Silverstein

<http://www.poets.org/poets/poets.cfm?prmID=105>

Shel Silverstein's page at poets.org contains a biography, photo, and related links.

A Brief History of Early Mars Probes, by Kenneth Silber

[http://www.space.com/scienceastronomy/solarsystem/mars\\_history\\_990922.html](http://www.space.com/scienceastronomy/solarsystem/mars_history_990922.html)

This is a brief article giving teachers a quick overview of the space probes to Mars

**Objectives:**

By completing this lesson, students will have the opportunity to compare scientific fact with imaginative writing. Using a modern poem, they will respond with a description of what they think a space creature might be like.

**Standards:**

**NY: 1:** Students will read, write, listen, and speak for information and understanding.

Standard 2: Students will read, write, listen, and speak for literary response and expression.

**NYC: E2b.** The student produces a response to literature. **E5a.** The student responds to non-fiction, fiction, poetry, and drama using interpretive, critical, and evaluative processes.

**CT: 1. Reading and Responding:** Students will read and respond in individual, literal, critical and evaluative ways to literary, informational and persuasive texts. **2. Producing Texts:** Students will produce written, oral and visual texts to express, develop and substantiate ideas and experiences.

**NJ: 3.3:** All students will write in a clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes. **3.4:** All students will read various materials and texts with comprehension and critical analysis.

**Technology and Materials Needed:**

1. Copy of Shel Silverstein's poem "Planet of Mars" from his book, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*.
2. Paper and pencil
3. Construction paper

**Recommended Lesson Plan Review Date:**

**Review Comments:**

Check Web sites.